

House Passes American Clean Energy and Security Act, Includes Halvorson Energy Efficiency Amendment

(Washington, DC) On Friday evening, the House of Representatives passed bipartisan landmark clean energy legislation with a vote of 219-212. Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) voted in favor of the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which will reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources, provide incentives for use of clean, renewable energy, cap emissions of greenhouse gases that cause global warming, and spur investment in clean energy technology in the United States.

"It's clear we need to change the direction of energy policy in this country, and this legislation will move us towards clean, renewable, home grown energy. I believe the 11th District has a lot to gain from this bill, including potential investments in wind and biofuels," said Halvorson.

The legislation will cap the total amount of greenhouse gases companies can emit. Companies in various energy intensive sectors of the economy will be issued emission allowances. Pricing greenhouse gas emissions will spur innovation and development of efficiencies to lower costs and emissions. A similar allowance system was successfully implemented by the Clean Air Act of 1990, which greatly reduced sulfur dioxide emissions that cause acid rain.

Halvorson, along with other Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee, negotiated for better incentives for farmers, including those who have already taken action towards reducing emissions on their farms.

"Agriculture is an important part of my district, and I wanted to make sure the bill would offer protections and incentives for farmers. America's next generation of energy is going to happen through farms and farm land, and I wanted to ensure that was reflected in the bill," said Halvorson.

The legislation also includes provisions to prevent the shifting of jobs to other countries. Energy-intensive and trade-exposed industries such as electric utilities, steel, cement and paper will receive allowances to cover their increased costs.

Industry supporters of the legislation are wide and varied, and include electric utilities, environmental organizations, labor organizations, auto companies, chemical companies and major manufacturers, among others.

"Constructing a wind turbine takes 250 tons of steel, and requires 8,000 parts. You can't export renewable power - and this is obviously the direction we need to go to reduce our reliance on foreign oil and create jobs right here in America," said Halvorson.

Halvorson's personal stamp is on the bill. As a co-chair of the moderate New Democrat Coalition's Energy Task Force, Halvorson's focus on energy efficiency legislation led to the inclusion of an amendment she introduced authorizing a national education and awareness program for business managers and government leaders of the energy-saving potential of mechanical insulation. With buildings responsible for 40% of U.S. energy demand and 40% of all greenhouse gas emissions, greater use of mechanical insulation, used to reduce energy lost in industrial and commercial buildings, could lead to significant efficiency gains and emissions reductions.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found the overall impact on the average household would be 22 to 30 cents per day-less than the cost of a postage stamp a day. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office analysis shows the average cost around 48 cents per day for an average household in 2020, without including efficiency savings that would be produced by investments in the bill.

Household savings generated from greater efficiency in appliances and homes are estimated to total over \$4,000 a year by 2030 according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

Furthermore, the EPA analysis of the bill estimates the gross domestic product will grow robustly under this legislation, from \$13 trillion in 2008 to over \$22 trillion in 2030, as clean energy technology is developed and emissions are reduced.

"I've listened closely to my constituents about this issue. I've held several energy roundtables and town halls, and I've reached out throughout this process. Their support of this bill was not unanimous, but it was strong, and I look forward to making sure this legislation works for them as it goes to the Senate," said Halvorson.